

Tourism

Irosin has many potential tourist spots varying from natural parks, hot and cold springs, viewing areas and historical landmark. The famous tourism attractions in the municipality are the Mateo Hot and Cold Spring Resort, St. Michael Archangel Roman Catholic Hilltop Church and protected areas. The Bolos Crystal Spring and the Valley View Park where eateries, kiosks and parking spaces were set up had become a rest area for truckers and travelers plying the Maharlika Highway. Another potential tourist attraction is the Mapaso mineral hot spring famous for its purported healing qualities. Irosin is an ideal jump-off site for mountaineering and ecological trek that is becoming popular among tourists both foreign and local. The municipality is an entry and exit area to BVNP one of the remaining tropical forests and is a protected area in the Bicol Region. Mount Jormajam and Mount Mara-ot Banwa are the other alternative places for mountaineering and ecological trekking.

There are also a number of tourist accommodations and facilities in Irosin. The Mateo Hot and Cold Springs Resort have conference halls, dormitories, cottages, eatery and swimming pools ideal for rest and recreation, conference and seminars. There is also the Guest World Resort and Nature Spring Resort with pools and accommodations. There are other lodging houses such as Villa Lim Condominium and Saint Michael Lodging House. Restaurants, snack bars and eateries are found along the CBD and inside the Irosin Public Market.

The most common cultural activities in the municipality are the annual santacruzán, barangay fiestas and town fiesta where Paray Festival is showcased. The Paray Festival in September culminates with the street play Viva San Miguel, celebrated in honor of Saint Michael Archangel, the patron saint of Irosin.

The local tourism industry has a great potential since

ecological tourism is the trend worldwide and the national government intends to develop Bicol as a major hub for tourists. Given the variety of natural tourist spots in the municipality and its strategic location, Irosin can be a convergence area of foreign and domestic tourists and visitors.

Investment Potentials

The investment potentials in Irosin that are agriculture-based are agri-business ventures like rice, coconut and commercial crops production as well as hog and poultry farms. Tree farming is also encouraged in mountainous areas and steep slopes 18% and above. Agricultural products processing namely rice milling, cereal processing, meat processing, vegetable and fruit processing, coconut processing including its by-products, and organic fertilizer production are investment priority areas. Miscellaneous manufacturing like garments, handicrafts, metal crafts, assemblers of jeepney and tricycle body, hand tractors and threshers and building components are encouraged. Subdivision and housing development, memorial parks and resorts and ecological tourism facilities development are feasible ventures. Investments in the establishment and operation of bonded and other kinds of warehouse, integrated public transport terminal and recreation and amusement centers are promising.

Industry and Services

Secondary Sector

Industries in Irosin are primarily agriculture-based. In 2009, there are only 14 registered establishments belong to the secondary sector where nine are rice mills, two are engaged in construction, an organic fertilizer center, a furniture manufacturer and a coco-fiber stitching plant. A number of home-based food and meat processors producing pili nut candies, local sausages and meat preserves are also noted. Most of the existing local industries are light and generate non-hazardous wastes. Few handicraft producers still thrive while a number already closed shop due to a significant decrease in foreign demand, economic slowdown and the scarcity of raw materials.

Tertiary Sector

There are 285 registered businesses from the tertiary sector in 2009 which are engaged in trade, transportation, finance and business service, and community, social and personal services. Majority of these establishments are wholesale and retail stores selling various kinds of merchandise. Meat, fish and vegetable dealers rank second in terms of number. There are also service shops, eateries, bakeries, food processors, drugstores, and amusement centers and video shops. Buying stations are found along M. L. Quezon Street where copra, palay and abaca are traded. Agricultural supplies, automotive parts dealers, appliance dealers and gasoline/refilling stations are also thriving.

Trading and business transaction in Irosin are concentrated mainly at the Central Business District (CBD) in the town center. The highlights of CBD are the Irosin Public Market, Municipal Hall, Public Auditorium and the line of commercial

establishments where commodity trading stations, wholesale and retail variety stores, banks and service shops are found. Presently, a commercial strip is growing from the corner of J. P. Rizal and M. L. Quezon Streets stretching all the way to the Maharlika Highway.

The financial institutions in Irosin are the Rural Bank of Irosin (RBI), a branch of Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), Camalig Rural Bank, Guinobatan Rural Bank, Cebuana Lhuiller Pawnshop, Tambunting Pawnshop, and Irosin Market Vendors and Farmers Development Cooperative (IMVEFADECO). The Land Bank of the Philippines-Irosin Branch caters to a wide range of customers from local government units, cooperatives as well as commercial and industrial establishments from micro to large enterprises. The bank likewise accept savings, current and time deposits and foreign currency exchange particularly dollar and serves as a collecting agency of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Social Security System (SSS) and Philippine Health Insurance. The Rural Bank of Irosin on the other hand offers production loan to farmers and livestock raiser, business financing to market vendors, retailers and service enterprises it also accepts savings and time deposit.

The increasing population in the rural barangays led to the setting up of barangays centers where public markets, chapel, health centers, barangay halls and multi-purpose pavements are normally clustered. Such centers are located in the barangays of Gabao, Batang, Monbon, Patag and Gulang-Gulang. Of the convergence areas Gabao is the most progressive.

Agriculture

Agricultural Crops

The local economy of Irosin is basically agricultural. More than 70% of the families rely on crop production and farm labor for livelihood and subsistence. Agricultural land comprises more than 80% of the total land area of the municipality. Of the entire agricultural land, 63.9% is under sustainable use, 13.7% are under regular utilization while 22.38% are categorized as over-used lands. The approximate area of agricultural land devoted to permanent crops is 9,896.53 hectares. These are planted to palay, coconut, abaca and citrus. Coconut occupies 41.5% of the total agricultural land devoted to permanent crops while abaca is planted to 35.39% but bunchy tops and mosaic virus infestation significantly reduced the areas devoted to abaca. Palay occupies 21.93% while citrus occupies 1.11% of the total agricultural land devoted to permanent crops.

Palay, the staple food of many Filipinos is the primary crop being produced constituting 63.7% of the estimated peso-value of the entire agricultural crops being produced in the municipality. The supply of palay is sufficient enough to meet the demand of the population with surplus being shipped-out and sold to neighboring municipalities and even reaches as the islands of Samar and Masbate. Coconut and abaca, the local commercial export crop rank second and third respectively in terms of volume produced. Coconut and abaca constitutes 23.8% and 10.8% respectively of the total estimated peso-value of the entire agricultural crops produced. Citrus, vegetables, root crops, corn and fruits are the minor crops produced in Irosin with a combined value of only 1.7% of the total value of crop produced.

Livestock and Poultry

Poultry and livestock are the secondary sources of income of most families in Irosin. Swine and chicken whether native or hybrid is raised by more families compared to the other species of livestock and fowls. Swine are usually grown in the backyard for very small-scale commercial purposes with breeding stocks ranging from 2 to less than 7 breeders. The present cattle population in the municipality is still very miniscule. Carabaos are usually raised and utilized for farm labor as substitute to tractors but there are those who sell carabaos to traders. Native and hybrid chicken are either raised for household consumption or sold in the neighborhood or in the market whenever the family is in need of additional cash to augment the demand. Few families raise goats and other domestic food animals either for commercial or domestic consumptions.

Agricultural Status

The tenurial status of the total 5,833 farms with an aggregate area of 7,758 hectares enumerated during the 1991 NSO Census of Agriculture are either fully-owned, tenanted, leased, rented or cultivated for free. The fully-owned farm is 32.74% of the total registered farms, 44.7% are still tenanted, 9.22% are leased while the remaining 4.29% are rented or cultivated for free. The 9.05% of the farms under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) had been either sold or mortgaged to other people. The average farm size is 0.645 hectares and 1.928 hectares in the lowland and in the upland respectively.

The percentage distribution of farms according to size shows that 39% are farms below 1 hectare while 30% are farms which area ranges from 1 to 2.99 hectares. The farms with sizes ranging from 3 to 4.99 hectares is 14%, while 11% are farms with area ranging from 5 to 9.99 hectares. The number of farms

with 10 to 24.99 hectares is only 5%, while the larger farms whose area is 25 hectares and above is only 1% of the total farms.

Various support infrastructures to agriculture are in place catering to the needs of farmers and agricultural workers. Agricultural farms facilities are mostly for palay production. These include hand tractors, sprayers, irrigation system, solar and mechanical dryers, threshers, ricemills and storage facilities, and farm-to-market roads.

Forestry

The remaining forest cover of Irosin is 2,434.9 hectares or 15.53% of the total land area, which is way below the ideal forest cover for a good ecological balance. Lands classified as forest is 6.6% of the total land area of the municipality with an aggregate area of 1,048.40 hectares. The remaining 93.4% of the area is classified as alienable and disposable. The protected lands of the municipality fall under the National Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS), the non-NIPAS are areas along the banks of the principal rivers and its tributaries with an approximate area of 32.50 hectares. These areas serve as habitat for various wildlife, plants and micro-organisms and are considered as critical watersheds. A part of BVNP located northeast of Irosin comprising 1,048.40 hectares is a NIPAS area while Mt. Jormajam and the Cawayan Mountain ranges are considered as Non-NIPAS areas.

The old growth dipterocarp forests are already gone except for the residual regenerating second growth forests and forests under rehabilitation planted to mahogany, gemelina, acacia, narra and other tree species. There are two Integrated Social Forestry Projects in barangay Liang and Cawayan with an area of more than 106 hectares. Around 576 hectares of deforested areas within the BVNP were planted with trees under the national reforestation program of the government.

The remaining forest cover is in danger of over extraction largely due to ever increasing human population. Illegal cutting, conversion of forests into unsustainable agricultural uses and the introduction of destructive farming practices such as slash and burn farming and indiscriminate extraction of minor forest products are accelerating the denudation of forest and the loss of biological diversity.